

In Colorado, the overall behavior of mountain plovers follows a predictable sequence. They arrive on their breeding grounds in late March, breed, and begin laying eggs in late April. Nests consist of a small scrape on flat ground in open areas. Most nests are placed on slopes of less than 5 degrees in areas where vegetation is less than 3 inches tall in April. Mountain plovers are thought to practice sequential polyandry, often establishing two clutches within several weeks. Clutches hatch by late June and chicks fledge by late July. The fall migration begins in late August and most birds are gone from the breeding grounds by late September.

The Pawnee National Grassland in northeastern Colorado and several counties in southeastern Colorado hold the majority of breeding mountain plovers (Graul and Webster 1976; Knopf and Miller 1994; Kingery 1998) in North America. The closest known location of mountain plover occurrence is along Spottlewood Creek (CNDIS 2000) and Spring Creek (Greystone 2000), northeast of the Rawhide Energy Station.

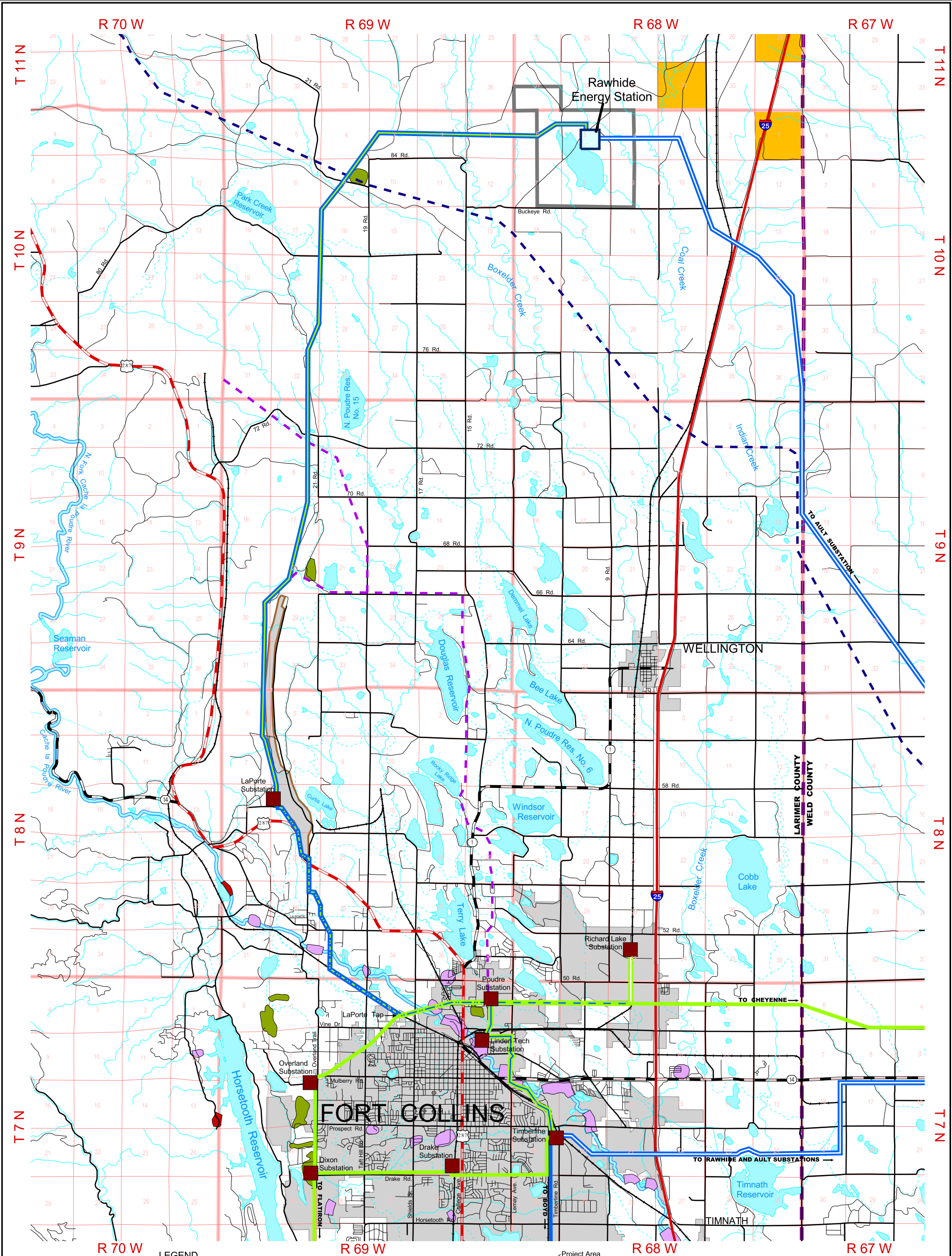
Potentially suitable habitat for the mountain plover does exist along the Project Area in several locations. All of these areas are in the northern portion of the Project Area, specifically north of the LaPorte substation. They include two prairie-dog colonies; northwest of Miner's Lake and southeast of Park Creek Reservoir, and the large area of short-grass prairie north of Park Creek (**Figure C-4**). No mountain plover habitat exists within the Project Area south of the LaPorte Substation. No mountain plovers were observed during an August 16, 2000 site visit, however, detailed surveys during the appropriate time of year may document their occurrence within the Project Area.

Black-Footed Ferret

The black-footed ferret is a federally listed endangered species. Black-footed ferrets are nocturnal animals that are nearly always associated with prairie dog colonies. Prairie dogs form large colonies in short-grass and mixed-grass prairies and are the main prey source for the black-footed ferret. Prairie dog burrows provide dens and rearing areas for ferret offspring. Ferrets may occur within colonies of white-tailed or black-tailed prairie dogs. The Project Area is within the range of the black-tailed prairie dog.

The USFWS has determined that, at a minimum, potential habitat for the black-footed ferret must include a single black-tailed prairie dog colony of greater than 80 acres. Alternately, a complex of smaller colonies within a 4.3 mile (7-km) radius circle totaling 80 acres of black-tailed prairie dog colonies would also provide the minimum requirements for potential habitat for the black-footed ferret (USFWS 1989a).

The Project Area is within the historical range of the black-footed ferret, although no black-footed ferrets are presently known to occur in eastern Larimer County. During site visits on August 4, 17, and 31, 2000, four small prairie dog colonies were observed scattered along the entire Project Area (**Figure C-4**). These field observations were confirmed by CDOW prairie dog colony mapping (CDOW 2000b). The colonies observed along the Project Area are too small to support black-footed ferrets because they are all only a few acres in size. In addition, these colonies cannot be considered a complex because they are spaced too far apart. Therefore, there is no potential habitat for black-footed ferrets within or near the Project Area.



- LEGEND**

 - Rebuild Existing 115kV Single Circuit to 115kV Double Circuit
 - Upgrade Existing 115kV Single Circuit to 115/230kV
 - Rebuild Existing 115kV Single Circuit to 115/230kV
 - Convert Existing 115kV Double Circuit to 115/230kV
 - Upgrade Existing 230kV Single Circuit to 230kV Double Circuit
 - Existing 115kV Double Circuit
 - Existing 230kV Double Circuit
 - Existing 115kV Single Circuit
 - Existing 230kV Single Circuit
 - Existing Substation
 - Rawhide Energy Station
 - Rawhide Property Boundary
 - Municipality
 - Mine Boundary
- Prebles Jumping-Mouse Survey Areas**

 - Prebles Jumping-Mouse Found
 - Prebles Jumping-Mouse Not Found
 - Black-Tailed Prairie Dog Colony
 - Mountain Plover Occurrence Area
 - US Interstate Highway
 - US Highway
 - State Highway
 - Primary Road
 - Secondary Road
 - Railroad
 - Cache la Poudre River
 - Stream
 - Ditch or Canal
 - Aqueduct
 - Lake/Reservoir
 - Section Line
 - County Line
 - Township/Range
 - Rural Electrical Association Transmission Line
 - Western Area Power Administration 345kV Circuit

COLORADO

Project Area

SOURCE: Mountain plover occurrence areas provided by Colorado Natural Heritage Program. Prebles jumping-mouse survey areas provided by City of Ft. Collins. Prairie-dog colonies identified during field reconnaissance of the project area.

N

1 2 3 4 Miles

Scale

PLATTE RIVER POWER AUTHORITY

FORT COLLINS TRANSMISSION LINE UPGRADE PROJECT

Figure C-4

Wildlife Survey and Occurrence Areas